

CLIMATE ACTION TEAM

Land Use & Infrastructure Working Group

Near-Term Implementation Plan

Strategy #3: Land Use Incentive Programs Supporting Conservation of Natural Resources and Agricultural Land

Working Group Overview: The Land Use and Infrastructure Working Group provides advice to the Strategic Growth Counsel (SGC) and the Climate Action Team (CAT) on sustainable land use policies and their link to climate change adaptation and mitigation. The group also works to coordinate state efforts at the interface of land use and climate change and ensure that various planning efforts (housing and development, transportation, public health, etc.) address the linkages between mitigation measures and adaptation strategies .

Working Group Agencies: The group includes staff from state agencies with expertise in and authority over issues related to energy, transportation, housing, environmental protection, agriculture, water supplies, wildlife preservation, and conservation of natural resources.

Participants include Cal/EPA, the Office of Planning and Research, Air Resources Board, California Energy Commission, Department of Food and Agriculture, Natural Resources Agency, CalTrans, Business-Transportation and Housing, Department of Water Resources, Department of Housing and Community Development, Department of Public Health, Dept of Toxics Substance Control, Water Resources Control Board, Department of Conservation, Department of Fish & Game, CalFire, and the Department of General Services.

Measure / Strategy

- A) Description: Williamson Act / Other Land Conservation Incentive Programs and Tools. To the extent possible, use existing programs to influence land use decisions to help lessen negative effects, mitigate and/or adapt to climate change impacts. Property tax incentives to promote the conservation, preservation and continued existence of open space lands, enforceably restricted to recreation, enjoyment of scenic beauty, use or conservation of natural resources, or production of food or fiber are described in the California Constitution, Article 13, Section 8.
- B) Agencies Involved: Department of Conservation; Wildlife Conservation Board; Coastal Conservancy; Department of Water Resources; Department of Public Health.
- C) Scoping Plan/Adaptation Plan Reference: CAS Agriculture Strategy 1.a; Strategy 3.a; Strategy 3.a.i; Strategy 3.b, California Climate Adaptation Strategy, December 2009.

- D) Metrics: Primary metric indicator for farmland conservation is the rate of loss of farmland. Farmland loss is monitored, mapped, and summarized on a two year cycle by the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program. Other Agencies/Departments monitor other natural resources. Indicators will need to be identified for issues such as loss/conversion of wetlands, coastal wetlands, and mineral resource extraction areas.
- E) Cross-cutting Issues: <see Tasks below> Information on loss or conversion of natural resource and agricultural lands is disseminated in support of Strategy 1.
- F) Tasks and Deliverables:

Task 3.1

1. Description: CAS Agriculture Strategy #1 - Water Supply and Conservation Support
2. Deliverables: Floodplain Easements - Work with willing sellers to identify voluntary floodplain corridor protection (flowage) easements on agricultural lands to maintain agricultural production that is compatible with flood conveyance. These actions will also enhance economic sustainability and protect urban residents from flooding, while protecting agricultural lands for the continued production of food and fiber.
3. Agencies Involved: Department of Water Resources, Department of Conservation.
4. Timeline: Ongoing.
5. Crosscutting Issues: Floodway easements allow conservation and development to progress in a more sustainable, resilient manner, which benefits multiple natural resource values.

Task 3.2

1. Description: CAS Agricultural Strategy #3 - Land Use Planning Practices
2. Deliverables: Policy Integration – CDFA, in collaboration with the Strategic Growth Council and other agencies, should provide guidance for cities and counties to help develop and adopt sustainable agriculture policies, particularly in conjunction with smart growth planning initiatives.
3. Agencies Involved: CDFA; DOC; SGC; CDPH
4. Timeline: Ongoing
5. Cross-cutting Issues: Access to healthy local foods benefits human health, reduces fuel consumption, and promotes local sustainability.

Task 3.3

1. Description: California Land Conservation Act (Williamson Act) Program Administration (CLCA)
2. Deliverables: The California Land Conservation Act of 1965--commonly referred to as the Williamson Act--enables local governments to enter into contracts with private landowners for the purpose of restricting specific parcels of land to agricultural or related open space use. In return, landowners receive property tax

assessments which are much lower than normal because they are based upon farming and open space uses as opposed to full market value. Local governments receive an annual subvention of forgone property tax revenues from the state via the Open Space Subvention Act of 1971.

3. Agencies Involved: DOC maintains ongoing program to implement.
4. Timeline: Ongoing, biennial cycle.
5. Cross-cutting Issues: Conserved land maintains options for current and future generations.

Task 3.4

1. Description: California Farmland Conservancy Program (CFCP)
2. Deliverables: The California Farmland Conservancy Program (CFCP) seeks to encourage the long-term, private stewardship of agricultural lands through the voluntary use of agricultural conservation easements. The CFCP provides grant funding for projects which use and support agricultural conservation easements for protection of agricultural lands.
3. Agencies Involved: DOC maintains ongoing program.
4. Timeline: Ongoing.
5. Cross-cutting Issues: Conservation of strategically valued parcels helps to preserve viability of agricultural practices in a larger, surrounding area, while having a positive influence on guiding growth patterns.

Task 3.5

1. Description: Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP)
2. Deliverables: The Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) produces maps and statistical data used for analyzing impacts on California's agricultural resources. Agricultural land is rated according to soil quality and irrigation status; the best quality land is called Prime Farmland. The maps are updated every two years with the use of a computer mapping system, aerial imagery, public review, and field reconnaissance.
3. Agencies Involved: DOC maintains an ongoing program, with reporting cycles every two years.
4. Timeline: Ongoing.
5. Cross-cutting Issues: FMMP data are used in preparation of CEQA documents, to indicate whether projects are on, or proximal to agricultural, resources. Community plans for sustainability utilize FMMP data to identify strategically located, high value farmland for purposes of zoning and protection.

Task 3.6

1. Description: CAS Agricultural Strategy #3 - Land Use Planning Practices
2. Deliverables: Wetland Easements – Pursuant to DWR Water Plan 2009, continue purchase of wetland easements on marginal, flood-prone, agricultural lands to diversify grower income and buffer productive lands from flood events and improve the environmental services provided by these lands. These efforts may include DWR, DFG, NRCS (Natural Resource Conservation Service), WCB (Wildlife Conservation Board) or other funding sources and incentivize private investment in the establishment and preservation of wetlands.
3. Agencies Involved: DWR; WCB; DFG.
4. Timeline: Ongoing.
5. Cross-cutting Issues: Existing and planned communities are vulnerable to changing climate and weather patterns. Planned conservation and restoration of floodways reduces threats, while conserving a maximum feasible amount of natural resource functions in a working-lands framework.

Task 3.7

1. Description: CDPH Network for a Healthy California Regional Collaboratives
2. Deliverables: CDPH Network for a Healthy California Regional Collaboratives work on initiatives based regional priorities. One priority for a few regions is to greatly increase the access to fresh fruits and vegetables from local farmers (benefits include: nurtures local economy, helps protect farmland, fosters local production, reduces transportation, etc.) In Central Coast region, based on this priority, 18 farmers markets have been started, and all accept (or in process) EBT, and most are located in low income areas. In Riverside School District (Riverside County), they started a massive salad bar program that pulls much of the produce offered from local farmers. Food banks are offering more fresh fruits and vegetables. Since 2004, Network participation allowed over a dozen California Association of Food Bank (CAFB) member food banks to expand their nutrition education and influenced some to change their organizations' food policies. With separate funding, CAFB initiated a popular Farm-to-Family program, which connects California growers and packers to food banks. This has greatly increased the amount of produce - estimated to be 80 million pounds in 2009 - distributed through the food banks.
3. Agencies Involved: CDPH
4. Timeline: Ongoing
5. Cross-cutting Issues: Transportation planning, new community planning, infill, brown fields, open space, local economy, jobs.

SUMMARY TABLE

Task	Deliverable	Agencies	Deadline
3.1	Easements for floods on working lands	DWR; DOC	Ongoing
3.2	Increased CDFA role in sustainable communities and climate adaptation strategies	CDFA; SGC	Ongoing
3.3	Contracts to preserve agricultural and open space values	DOC	Ongoing
3.4	Easements protecting selected, strategically located pieces of farmland	DOC	Ongoing
3.5	Biennial report on trends of farmland conversion	DOC	Ongoing
3.6	Easements on marginal, flood prone land to protect diverse values, including habitat and open space.	Various, including DWR, WCB, DFG, NRCS	Ongoing
3.7	Increase in availability of fresh, local healthy fruits and vegetables	CDPH	Ongoing